

NEWS FROM
SENATOR TIM JOHNSON,
SENATOR JOHN THUNE, and
REPRESENTATIVE STEPHANIE HERSETH

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SD Delegation Introduces Wind Cave Legislation

Washington, DC –South Dakota's Congressional Delegation, U.S. Senators Tim Johnson (D-SD) and John Thune (R-SD) and Representative Stephanie Herseth (D-SD) today introduced legislation that passed the United States Senate last Congress to authorize the National Park Service to expand the boundary of Wind Cave National Park.

"Wind Cave National Park is not only one of the oldest National Parks, but one of the most unique and pristine. Some four million visitors come to the Black Hills each year and tourism is one of South Dakota's leading economic engines. I am pleased that Senator Thune has agreed to join me as an original sponsor of this bill, and that Representative Herseth has also agreed to introduce an identical version of the bill in the House of Representatives. Our unified efforts can hopefully jump-start this once-in-a-life-time opportunity, and we will move quickly to pass the bill this year," said Johnson. Johnson was a cosponsor of this legislation during the 108th Congress and is a member of the Senate Energy Committee, which has jurisdiction of the matter.

"For over a century, Americans have enjoyed South Dakota's Wind Cave National Park. We can now add to this natural resource, expanding a valuable tourist destination and preserving over 5,000 acres. I appreciate my colleagues' willingness to work together to move this important legislation forward," said Senator Thune.

Representative Herseth said, "Wind Cave National Park has been a valued American treasure for more than 100 years. With this legislation, we have a tremendous opportunity to expand the park and enhance its value for visitors to enjoy forever. I am proud to join with the rest of South Dakota's Congressional delegation to help ensure that these additional 5,600 pristine acres can be protected in their natural, undeveloped state. As a member of the House Resources Committee, I will continue to work to move this legislation forward."

The legislation authorizes the expansion of Wind Cave National Park to include approximately 5,675 acres of land. The proposed addition includes two private parcels of 5,555 and 40 acres, both owned by willing sellers; and 80 acres which would be transferred from the Bureau of Land Management. These lands are a natural extension of the park, and will improve fire management of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem.

Wind Cave National Park is one the nation's first national parks, containing in its boundaries one of the greatest expanses of underground cave complexes in North America. Established in 1903, Wind Cave National Park protects one of the world's oldest known cave formations with

hundreds of miles of underground compartments. Amazingly, scientific measurements indicate that only five percent of the total cave has been discovered.

With the option to acquire approximately 5,500 acres of land from willing sellers, Wind Cave National Park has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to significantly enhance one of the last remaining mixed-grass prairie ecosystems in the world. The acquisition of this land adjacent to the southern boundary of the park will preserve a key archeological site described as one of the only existing buffalo jumps used by Native Americans as they hunted the giant animal.

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